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AUTHOR Roen, Duane H.
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ABSTRACT

This paper describes an interdisciplinary high school course, "Cultural Diversity in American Life," taught by an English teacher, a social studies teacher, and an art teacher. Designed to help students understand and accept differences in culture, the course consists of units on the black American, the American Indian, the Jewish American, and the American woman. The author tells how the three teachers work together to plan and conduct the course, lists objectives and materials for each of the four units, and describes some of the in-class activities of the course. A supplementary paper answers questions which are frequently asked about the course: How can such a course be "sold" to administrators? How should the teachers be selected? What problems are experienced in teaching the course, and how can they be eliminated? The author includes a list of some bibliographies on the literature of cultural pluralism. (GW)

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# THE HUMANITIES AND INTERDISCIPLINARY INSTRUCTION

Duane H. Roen - New Richmond High School
High School English Chairperson

Any graduate student who feels that his Master's thesis or research paper will be of functional value to him or to someone else develops a high level of motivation to complete that project. I was such a graduate student. With Dr. Nicholas J. Karolides as my advisor at the University of Wisconsin-River Falls, I authored a rather lengthy paper entitled Cultural Diversity in American Life: A Proposed Literature Course. Now, three years later, I am in my second year of involvement with a course entitled Cultural Diversity in American Life, which focuses on selected American minorities.

Instructors from two other departments in our high school are teaching the course with me. Clark Anderson, who is a member of our school's social studies department, has a broad background in psychology, sociology, and American history. Mary Rivard, an art instructor, has had valuable experience in the area of cultural art. The three of us form the school's humanities department, which did not exist two years ago. All three of us are equally active in the planning and teaching of Cultural Diversity.

Once each cycle (six school days) the three of us spend one hour planning the specific activities that we will incorporate into the next two cycles. We find that such planning gives us an opportunity to make adjustments for rental films that arrive at times other than those for which they were scheduled, programs that appear on television unexpectedly (we do not have a functional video tape machine), or resource materials and speakers that become available at the last minute. In each planning session we confirm the schedule for the

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immediately succeeding cycle and establish a tentative schedule for the following one. Additionally, we specify the materials that should be used to facilitate those activities, the instructor(s) who will have primary responsibility for those activities, and the number of mods (twenty minutes each) that we will need to complete those activities.

The word primary in the preceding sentence is an important one, for it alludes to the fact that all three of us (and any student teachers) have some responsibility in every class meeting, and evaluate every presentation. If, for example, Clark Anderson is leading a discussion of the Reconstruction, Mary Rivard and I must participate as active or passive members of that discussion. We may also provide Clark with some negative or positive evaluation of the manner in which he directed the activity. We sometimes suggest alternative methods that may work better in the future.

All of the "teachers" of the course are also involved in every activity by being students in the course. All of us complete (almost) all of the graphic art assignments that Mary requests the students to complete. All of us read (almost) all of the materials that Clark and I assign. This procedure allows us to make the same mistakes that the students make, learn the same concepts that the students learn, and feel the same frustrations that the students feel. The procedure also helps to make the class a cohesive group. The teachers come off as being partially human, and humans like to relate to others of the same species.

The previous comments should indicate that one teacher is not responsible for the same class period every cycle. If, for example, I want to use four consecutive class meetings to discuss a particular novel like The Chosen by Chaim Potok, the three of us create a schedule for the next two cycles that allows me to do that. If, on the other hand, Clark would like to spend a class meeting discussing the post-World War Two Zionist movement in the United States, we will create a schedule that allows him to do that. The only factor

that limits our extreme scheduling flexibility is that we must meet within the time periods indicated in the following diagram. (We meet during the mods that are marked with diagonal lines.)

| MODULE | Day 1 | Day 2 | Day 3 | Day 4 | Day 5 | Day 6 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 8:08 – 8:30 | ▨ | | ▨ | | ▨ | |
| 2 8:30 – 8:50 | ▨ | | ▨ | | ▨ | |
| 3 8:50 – 9:10 | ▨ | | ▨ | | ▨ | |
| 4 9:10 – 9:30 | | | | | | |
| 5 9:30 – 9:50 | | | | | | |
| 6 9:50 – 10:10 | | | | | | |
| 7 10:10 – 10:30 | | | | ▨ | | ▨ |
| 8 10:30 – 10:50 | | | | ▨ | | ▨ |
| 9 10:50 – 11:10 | | | | | | |
| 10 11:10 – 11:30 | | | | | | |
| 11 11:30 – 11:50 | | | | | | |
| 12 11:50 – 12:10 | | | | | | |
| 13 12:10 – 12:30 | | | | | | |
| 14 12:30 – 12:50 | | | | | | |
| 15 12:50 – 1:10 | | | | | | |
| 16 1:10 – 1:30 | | | | | | |
| 17 1:30 – 1:50 | | | | | | |
| 18 1:50 – 2:10 | | | | | | |
| 19 2:10 – 2:30 | | | | | | |
| 20 2:30 – 2:50 | | | | | | |
| 21 2:30 – 3:10 | | | | | | |

Even more important than the schedule for the course are the philosophy and objectives that map the direction of Cultural Diversity in American Life. The philosophy and objectives for the course appear below in the same form that they appear in our school's K-12 North Central Association evaluation manual. They fairly accurately present the intent of Cultural Diversity in American Life.

Course Title: CULTURAL DIVERSITY IN AMERICAN LIFE

General Course Philosophy: The inability to accept differences in cultures has long forced man to reject, hate, and even destroy people who vary in race, sex, color, nationality, or creed. This inability helped Hitler to exterminate several million Jews during World War Two. It perpetuated the white man's slow and agonizing elimination of the American Indian. It has helped to inflict severe tyranny on many millions of black South Africans. It has even forced the American woman to assume a subordinate status in her society.

We believe that only through close consideration of other cultures can we ever hope to eradicate intolerance and replace it with acceptance. Only when this acceptance of other cultures occurs can man foster world-wide cooperation that will prevent him from destroying his entire planet.

General Course Objectives: The student will be able to:

1. outline major historical events and explain their effects or interactions between the white middle class and selected minority group Americans.

2. identify prejudicial, stereotypical, and discriminatory attitudes and explain possible sources and functions of behavior that may be linked with such attitudes.

3. identify the geographic, economic, political, social, and educational factors which are responsible for individual differences among all human beings and which are frequently and mistakenly linked to race, color, or nationality. (e.g. dialects and ideolects)

4. identify environmental factors which may evolve into selected themes for poetry, fiction, nonfiction, drama, and graphic art.

5. produce selected types of literary or graphic art which may be prevalent among selected geo-ethnic subcultures.

Unit: The Black American

General Objective(s): The student will develop an awareness of the relationship of the learning disciplines rather than placing each discipline in

a "little box" of its own. At the same time the student will be able to distinguish the unique contribution of each discipline to the topic of cultural diversity. While the unit will concentrate on the black in American society, it also lends itself to the construction of a foundation for the other units of the course.

Specific Objectives: The student will be able to:

1. outline the history of the black from early seventeenth century Africa to late twentieth century North America.

2. identify and explain the environmental factors which help to create dialects and ideolects.

3. list and explain the universal topics in the literary and graphic art of all men: gods, nature, society, himself, everyday experiences, and fantasy.

4. develop his discussion skills through the practice which is inherent in the oral consideration of unit materials.

5. explicate the pervading themes in much of the literature which is written by and/or about black Americans.

6. trace the development of specific prejucices held by whites and blacks toward each other, interpret the significance of those prejudices, and explain the relationship of prejudices, biases, discriminations, and stereotypes.

7. identify the effects of slave trade and the peculiar characteristics of the institutions, values, and behaviors of black Americans.

8. cite examples of prejudice toward the black American in the laws, institutionalized practices, and attitudes of white America since the Civil War.

9. explain how prejudices are learned, the function they serve, and at least two ways they can be acted out toward minority groups.

10. gain sufficient manipulative skills necessary for expression of ideas in visual media.

Unit: The Native American

General Objective(s): This unit, which will concentrate on the rise and fall of the American Indian, is designed to illustrate the conflicting attitudes and goals of the American Indian and the WASP.

Specific Objectives: The student will be able to:

1. outline the history of selected tribes of American Indians from their emergence on the North American continent to the present.

2. identify and explain selected variations that exist between the more than three hundred American Indian languages, which belong to the twenty-five different American Indian language families.

3. cite examples of lexical contributions of the American Indian languages to the English language.

4. compare and contrast selected American Indian tribal myths, Greek myths, and their Christian equivalents.

5. explain the relationships of myths to scientific facts.

6. explicate the pervading themes in much of the literature which has been written by and/or about American Indians.

7. cite examples of the anthropological differences between selected American Indian tribes.

8. explain the effects of the institution of "the reservation" on the American Indian.

9. gain sufficient skills in identification and manipulation of selected art forms of several American Indian tribes.

10. identify major cultural differences and similarities among North American Indian nations.

11. outline the history of the white man's attempts to deal with what he perceived as the "Indian problem."

12. describe the socio-economic status and prospects for most American Indians and identify beliefs and practices contributing to major socio-economic problems.

13. identify and explain at least three current American Indian viewpoints as to what should be done by and for the American Indian.

14. fashion a handbuilt pot in accordance with traditional native American techniques as demonstrated by the instructor. Ideally the student will also make or find the tools used in the construction and decoration of the pot.

15. realize the close relationship not only between the craftsman and his work but also the tools used in the process and the finished product.

16. construct a frame loom, warp it, and execute a weaving according to traditional native American standards.

17. develop an appreciation for the techniques and skills used in the making of textiles (which are largely taken for granted in "modern" societies).

18. construct a functional basket using the coil or twining method as used by native American craftspersons.

19. decorate a piece of cloth or execute a woven beaded piece in accordance with native American methods.

Unit: The Jewish American

General Objective(s): The student will be able to extend his knowledge of the Jewish American.

Specific Objectives: The student will be able to:

1. outline the history of Jewish culture from 17th century Europe to present-day America.

2. explicate the pervading themes in much of the literature which is written by and/or about Jewish Americans.

3. give evidence of the minority group treatment which Jews have received and indicate the effects of that treatment.

4. develop, administer, and analyze an attitude scale which measures the degree to which anti-Jewish attitudes are present in New Richmond.

5. identify selected elements of Jewish culture which have been adopted by Americans.

6. the student will be able to explain the relationship of Jewish art to the religion and history of the people.

7. create a clay candle holder, keeping in mind the significance of light.

Unit: The American Woman

General Objective(s): The student will develop a greater understanding of the changes in the historical roles of the American woman.

Specific Objectives: The student will be able to:

1. identify and analyze specific examples of stereotypes that are placed on women.

2. contrast the treatment given to men and women in relatively similar social, political, and economic settings.

3. evaluate the implications and impacts of The Equal Rights Amendment.

4. identify characteristics of women in literature which may perpetuate existing stereotypes and prejudices.

5. cite and analyze examples of women who have successfully broken selected sexist barriers in social, political, artistic, and economic environments.

6. outline the origin and development of many traditionally male and female roles in white America and compare and contrast them with traditionally male and female roles in other cultures.

7. develop and/or participate in experiments that may indicate that men and women are merely different, not unequal.

8. explicate the pervading themes in much of the literature which is written by and/or about women.

The above outline does not reflect (and perhaps it should) the independent study projects that students complete for the course. Each member of the class must undertake an in-depth endeavor that analyzes some aspect of the course which we have not had time to explore. Last year's students engaged in investigations considering the reservations of northern Wisconsin, the Battle of the Little Big Horn, black roles in television programs, and others. This year's students are completing explorations of the following topics: treatment of rape victims, discrimination against gay people, the elderly as a minority, sexism in advertising, students as a minority group, sexism in prostitution laws, and others. All of the projects are orally presented to the class as a whole.

No list of objectives is very valuable unless it is facilitated with meaningful activities. One of our most successful activities for both last year and for this year has been to have members of the class present oral reviews of children's books. The reviews are specifically intended to deal with the presence or absence of any treatment of stereotypes. Students have an enjoyable time perusing the children's section of the local libraries. The most interesting reviews have dealt with Mimi[1] by Lisl Weil, I Want to be a Homemaker[2] by Carla Greene, What Makes a Bird a Bird?[3] by May Garelick, Swimming Hole[4] by Jerrold Beim, and My Special Best Words[5] by John Steptoe.

Mimi is about a little French girl who wants to be a policeman because she admires her two uncles who are policemen. She cannot be a policeman, though, because she is a girl. "If only she were a boy. (sic) She too would protect the people as her uncles do."[6] The book further states, "Only a girl... that is just it. That is Mimi's big trouble. People who do big important things are never girls."[7] (It may be important to note that twenty-five of the twenty-six students in Cultural Diversity this year are females.)

In I Want to be a Homemaker a little girl named Jane plays the role that has been traditionally expected of girls. Jane has a playhouse in which she

loves to sweep floors, dust furniture, wash and iron clothes, cook meals, and feed children (dolls). The reason that Jane loves to do all of these activities is that she knows how much they will help her to become an excellent homemaker in the adult world. Jane's mother actively reinforces the role which Jane has "chosen" to play.

At the other end of the spectrum is What Makes a Bird a Bird? by May Garelick. This delightfully informative book identifies the features that do and do not distinguish birds from other living creatures. Flying does not distinguish birds from other members of the animal kingdom because there are insects, mammals, and even fish that fly. Furthermore, there are some birds that do not fly. The melodious sounds that birds emit do not distinguish them from other animals because certain species of insects also produce very melocious tones. Other animals also build nests and lay eggs. Birds, however, have feathers. No other species in the animal kingdom possess that quality. The analogy, then, is that the quality of being human is not determined by skin color, sex, nationality, or creed.

Swimming Hole focuses on a group of preadolescent males who play together. Larry, one of the two black members of an otherwise white group, experiences the rejection of Steve, a new member of the group. Steve explains his motive for rejecting Larry by stating, "I don't want to play with anyone who's colored!"[8] Later in the story Steve suffers from a severe sunburn, and the other members of the group seize the opportunity to illustrate to Steve how unfair his earlier rejection of Larry had been. They tell Larry, who is very red, "We don't want to play with anyone the color you are."[9] After some rather painful introspection Steve admits to the group, "It doesn't matter what color people are."[10]

My Special Best Words is unique. It deals with the daily routine of a motherless black family. Throughout the book the two preschool aged children

in the book spend much of the time discussing and contemplating their natural bodily functions. John Steptoe's treatment of these bodily functions makes them seem like very normal topics of conversation. The child who is exposed to this book is being helped to acquire very healthy attitudes towards them.

The publishers of Psychology Today have marketed a game called Blacks and Whites. The game has rules similar to those of Monopoly except that any participants who choose to play the game as blacks begin the game with almost no resources. They also find it extremely difficult to acquire further resources through the course of the game. Conversely, the participants who choose to play the game as whites begin with many resources. They find it relatively easy to acquire further resources through the course of the game. The only way that any black players can win the game is to form a coalition with other black players. The game, of course, motivates much valuable discussion.

We require students to review one book for each unit of the course. The students work in groups of three or four that share the responsibilities for the reviews. What makes these reviews particularily successful is the variety of formats that they have. Each group is required to submit a written review of its book. The reviews are then duplicated and distributed to all of the members of the class. After the class has had an opportunity to read the written reviews, the various groups present oral reviews of their books. Through a great deal of faculty encouragement, the students have developed some very creative presentations. During the past year we have seen press conferences in which reporters interview the author of a particular book or the major characters of another. We have watched students reenact some major scenes from novels or plays. We have "experienced" some carefully prepared multimedia interpretations of other books. We have also witnessed some very involved student-led discussions in which all of the members of the class participated actively.

The materials of our course that have most successfully motivated students are quite varied. The Afro-American materials that tend to elicit the greatest responses from students include Manchild in the Promised Land by Claude Brown, The Death of Bessie Smith by Edward Albee, "The Ballad of Rudolph Reed" by Gwendolyn Brooks, "Between the World and Me" by Richard Wright, and "Minority Stereotypes in Children's Literature: The Bobbsey Twins, 1904-1968" by Sol Cohen. The native American materials all seem to be equally successful. The most successful selection for the course, though, has to be The Chosen by Chaim Potok.

The really important factors that make any course like this successful, however, are a fairly flexible schedule and fairly flexible personalities in the people that teach the course. The schedule must allow all of the instructors of the course to meet with the class in at least one joint session per cycle (or week). We are lucky in that the schedule permits us to meet jointly every day. Without this possibility a course like this one might tend to come off as three separate courses that just coincidentally have identical titles.

Teacher personalities must be pliable enough to accept the constant flow of constructive criticism that naturally evolves out of a situation in which two or more professionals work together very closely. There is no room for grudges, envy, or personal vendetta. One has to take on the attitude of a student teacher who is attempting to develop his or her strengths and eliminate his or her weaknesses. The course encourages both teachers and students to be learners; perhaps that is what education is intended to do.

FOOTNOTES

[1]Lisl Weil, Mimi (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1961).

[2]Carla Greene, I Want to be a Homemaker (Chicago: Children's Press, 1961).

[3]May Garelick, What Makes a Bird a Bird? (New York: Follett Publishing Company, 1969).

[4]Jerrold Beim, Swimming Hole (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1950).

[5]John Steptoe, My Special Best Words (New York: The Viking Press, 1974).

[6]Weil, p. 16.

[7]Weil, p. 14.

[8]Beim.

[9]Ibid.

[10]Ibid.

CLASS READINGS

I. The Afro-American Unit

Films

"Angry Voices of Watts" - Films, Inc.
"Bill Cosby on Prejudice" - Pyramid Films
"Black and White: Uptight" - Bailey-Film Associates
"Black History: Lost, Stolen or Strayed" - Film Association
"Diary of a Harlem Family" - Indiana University
"Paul Laurence Dunbar: America's First Black Poet" - Pyramid Films

Poetry

"The Alarm Clock" - Mari Evans
"The Ballad of Rudolf Reed" - Gwendolyn Brooks
"Between the World and Me" - Richard Wright
"Incident" - Countee Cullen
"I Too" - Langston Hughes
"The Lynching" - Anne Spencer
"The Negro Speaks of Rivers" - Langston Hughes
"We Wear the Mask" - Paul Laurence Dunbar
"The White City" - Claude McKay
"The White House" - Claude McKay

Drama

"The Death of Bessie Smith" - Edward Albee

Nonfiction Prose

"The First Black Movie Stars" - Don Bogle
From Slavery to Freedom - John Hope Franklin
Manchild in the Promised Land - Claude Brown
"Minority Stereotypes in Children's Literature: The Bobbsey Twins, 1904-1968" - Sol Cohen

Fiction

"Blood-Burning Moon" - Jean Toomer

II. The Native American Unit

Films

"The American Indian Speaks" - Encyclopedia Britannica
"The Birch Canoe Builder" - ACI Films, Inc.
"Indian Influences in the United States" - Coronet
"North American Indian: Lament of the Reservation" - McGraw-Hill
"We Will Fight No More Forever" - Xerox

Poetry

American Indian Authors - Natachee Scott Momaday
American Indian Poetry - George W. Cronin
The Sky Clears - A. Grove Day

Nonfiction Prose

"American Indian Influence" from American English - Albert Marckwardt
"American Indian Mythology" - Mary Ann Nelson
Crafts of the North American Indians - Richard C. Schneider
The Eskimos - Edward Moffat Weyer
Folklore on the American Land - Duncan Emrich
"Genesis I" - Bible
"How the Animals Secured Fire" (common American Indian myth)
"How the World and Mankind Were Created" (Greek myth) - Edith Hamilton
"How the World Was Made" (Cheyenne myth)
"How the World Was Made" (Modoc myth)
The Indian Heritage of America - Alvin M. Josephy, Jr.
Indians of the Northwest Coast - Philip Drucker
Indians of the Plains - Robert H. Lowie
"Little Burnt Face" (Micmac myth)
Man's Rise to Civilization - Peter Farb
"The Origin of Fire" (Nez Perce myth)
"Prometheus and Io" (Greek myth) - Edith Hamilton
"Why the Sun is Brighter Than the Moon" (Lilloet myth)
Woodstock Craftsman's Manual - Jean Young

Fiction

The Story Catcher - Mari Sandoz

Resource Persons

Father Ted Zuern - Holy Rosary Rectory, Minneapolis, Minnesota

III. The American Woman Unit

Films

"Growing Up Female"

Poetry

"Because I could not stop for Death..." - Emily Dickinson
"Boy With His Hair Cut Short" - Muriel Rukeyser
"Bring me the sunset in a cup..." - Emily Dickinson
"Cheers" - Eve Merriam
"Did We abolish Frost..." - Emily Dickinson
"The difference between Despair..." - Emily Dickinson

Tapes

"Free to be You and Me" - Marlo Thomas

"For a Child Expected" - Anne Ridler
"Helen" - H. D.
"How to Eat a Poem" - Eve Merriam
"I Knew A Woman" - Theodore Roethke
"I like a look of Agony..." - Emily Dickinson
"I May, I Might, I Must" - Marianne Moore
"I never lost as much but twice..." - Emily Dickinson
"I would not paint-a picture..." - Emily Dickinson
"Love is Not All" - Edna St. Vincent Millay
"The Microscope" - Marine Kumin
"My life closed twice before its close..." - Emily Dickinson
"A narrow Fellow in the Grass..." - Emily Dickinson
"No rack can torture me..." - Emily Dickinson
"Poetry" - Marianne Moore
"Rebecca" - Hilaire Belloc
"Revolution is the Pod..." - Emily Dickinson
"Shall I take thee, the Poet said..." - Emily Dickinson
"Success is counted sweetest..." - Emily Dickinson
"To the Virgins, to Make Much of Time" - Robert Herrick
"Unable are the Loved to die..." - Emily Dickinson
"Wild nights-Wild Nights!..." - Emily Dickinson

Nonfiction Prose

Herstory - Judy Sochen
"The Preface to the Reader" from The World's Olio - Margaret Cavendish, Duchess of Newcastle
"The Prevailing Opinion of a Sexual Character Discussed" - Mary Wollstonecraft
"A Vindication of the Rights of Woman" - Mary Wollstonecraft
"We Are Determined to Forment a Rebellion" - Abigail Adams

IV. The Jewish American Unit

Films

"Let My People Go" - Metromedia Producers Corporation

Drama

Incident at Vichy - Arthur Miller

Fiction

The Chosen - Chaim Potok
Great Jewish Short Stories - Saul Bellow (editor)

Duane H. Roen
New Richmond High School
New Richmond, WI 54017

# Interdisciplinary Approach to Cultural Diversity

I would like to preface my presentation today with a comment about the title of my speech as it is printed in the program. Instead of the general title "Humanities and Interdisciplinary Instruction" it should perhaps be, more accurately "The Organization of Interdisciplinary Approaches to Cultural Pluralism." In a dinner conversation with Louise Rosenblat last night, by the way, I learned that the term "cultural Pluralism" is not a new one. A fellow named Charles Kallen developed it in the early 1920's, in spite of protests by John Dewey, who argued with him that the term should be "cultural orchestration."

In my presentation I will focus on the problems of organizing an interdisciplinary course in cultural pluralism. I don't claim to be a foremost authority on the topic, but I do claim to have had several years experience with a course that three of us teach in New Richmond, Wisconsin.

As all of you know, President-elect Jimmy Carter earlier this month helped to promote cultural pluralism in his home town of Plains, Georgia by using whatever power he possesses to persuade the other members of his congregation to accept non-whites into their church. I don't know if any of us can be certain of his motives, but we can applaud the outcome of his efforts. Perhaps we can also use this incident to substantiate the national relevance of this session's topic. Perhaps we can even use related headlines like this one (Read the headline) as catalysts for classroom discussion.

When I discuss the topic of cultural plurslism with other educators, the most common complaint I hear is that there aren't enough materials available to put together a course dealing with the topic. That complaint surprises me, to say the least, because there is an absolute wealth of materials.

To substantiate that contention, I would like to give you a list of just

several bibliographies of the literature of cultural pluralism.

(Distribute copies of the bibliography)

I want to spend just a few minutes discussing several of the bibliographies listed.

(Use the notes on the sheet. Show the bibliographies to the audience.)

In addition to these sources, there are a number of others listed in the October 1976 issue of English Journal. As most of you know, (hold up copy) this issue of English Journal focuses on the topic of this session. If you have not yet had the opportunity to read it, it would be worth your while to do so. You perhaps noticed that there are a number of related sessions at this convention.

Before I talk about the development and organization of the course I help teach, I would like to give you a revision of an article of mine that appeared in the January issue of the Wisconsin English Journal. In the article I outline the objectives for the course, and I mention some of the materials and activities of the course. I won't discuss the article, but I'll give it to you now in order to give you a chance to ask questions about it later.

In the past when I have spoken to groups of English teachers about the development and organization of New Richmond's interdisciplinary course in cultural pluralism, the same questions seem to crop up. I'm going to address myself some of those questions because I feel that they are common to anyone who teaches or would like to teach such a course. Some of those questions are:

1) What problems did you encounter when you tried to sell the idea of such a course to your administration?
   a. How did you handle those problems?
2) How did you or the administration select the teachers for the course?
3) What problems did you experience the first time you taught the course?
   a. How did you eliminate those problems?
   b. What problems have you been unable to eliminate?

Before administrators ask any questions about the organization and content of a new course, they ask quite forcefully about the amount of planning that went into developing the course. In our case, they wanted detailed documentation of that planning.

We promptly provided that documentation by presenting to our administration a copy of this (hold up copy) a Master's paper, which was a result of several years of investigation in the area of cultural pluralism.

I'm not certain that such thorough planning is necessary in all cases, but I am certain that without some similar preparation, administrators are going to be quite reluctant to even listen to requests for new courses such as this one.

Another thing that all administrators want when a department or departments want to augment the school's list of course offerings is a rationale for a new course. In our case, administrators wanted a justification for teaching cultural pluralism, and they wanted a justification for using three instructors to do it.

It's not that difficult to present arguments for courses that are designed to promote greater understanding of people who have different cultural backgrounds. Very few educators would argue that, at best, all we should ever hope for is that students learn to "tolerate" native Americans, blacks, Chicanos, women, the poor, the aged, and others.

It is, on the other hand, more difficult to convince administrators that two, three, or more teachers should be involved in a course that one teacher could (quote) "handle" (unquote).

One needs look at the nature of a course dealing with cultural pluralism in order to easily justify an interdisciplinary approach. A culture does not consist only of its literature or its graphic art or its music or its history. All of these elements, plus a few more, make up a culture. How, then, can an English teacher or an art teacher or music teacher or a social studies teacher adequately present to his or her students a view of another culture? It's nearly

impossible. All of these teachers must work together, along with other resource people, to help students understand the composition of other cultures. The backgrounds of all these people need to be cooperatively utilized if other cultures are to be anything more than one-dimensional.

Administrators also want to know if offering an interdisciplinary course means that more staff members will need to be hired or that other courses will have to be eliminated. If the answer to either of these questions is "yes," you probably won't be teaching an interdisciplinary course.

Well, how, then, can this extra course be offered? The answer to that is simple but demanding. Teachers have to be committed enough to such an undertaking to be willing to assume more and not just different teaching responsibilities. It may mean an extra preparation and an extra hour in the classroom every day. If teachers are not willing to make an additional commitment, they perhaps need to reevaluate their reasons for wanting interdisciplinary courses in such areas as cultural pluralism.

This brings us to the problem of selecting teachers for interdisciplinary courses. (pause) The teachers simply need to select themselves. In the case of cultural pluralism they need to step forward and demonstrate their commitment to greater understanding of other cultures. These teachers also need to be willing to cooperate with other teachers on the team. Without cooperative effort, an interdisciplinary course soon degenerates into three or four courses that just happen to meet in the same room at the same time.

The teachers for such a course also need to have a variety of backgrounds that will lend themselves to a multi-faceted approach. In New Richmond we have what I feel is a nearly complete team. The art instructor has a strong background in art history. The social studies instructor has background in history and perhaps, more importantly, even stronger training in psychology and sociology. I, of course, have training in teaching literature, but I have had stronger training in language. We have been unable to add a music teacher to

the team, but we have music instructors which do serve as resource persons. We also use a number of other resource persons from the area, which includes Minneapolis-St. Paul.

A major problem that we experienced in New Richmond the first time we taught the course Cultural Diversity in American Life was working with the schedule. The art instructor met with the students at a time when the social studies instructor and I had classes of our own. Similarly, the social studies teacher and I met with the students alone. We only had one class meeting a cycle in which all three of us could be there. As a result, the three of us had little opportunity to interact in class. The students began to feel that they were working with one teacher at a time and that they were enrolled in three or four separate courses. We, as teachers, had a difficult time alluding to other discussions because we had not witnessed or participated in all of the other discussions.

The computer experts easily solved that problem for us by creating a schedule that allowed all of us to be present at all class meetings.

By the way, all of us do attend every class meeting even if only one or two of us have responsibility for a particular lesson. We feel it's important for each of us to also be a student in the class.

A problem that we have had every time we teach the course is deciding which materials to use. There always seem to be too many excellent plays, poems, short stories, novels, and nonfiction pieces. What we've done, though, is what all of you do in your courses. We gradually eliminate those materials that seem to be the least effective and add materials that seem exciting. In essence, then, students through their responses make the decisions about materials.

Another problem that sometimes surfaces in our course is the unwillingness of some students to participate in class discussion. In a course dealing with cultural pluralism, that problem can be especially severe and ironic. Students

have to be willing and able to discuss their biases and prejudices with others if they are ever going to fully understand them.

Last year in the course we had several closely knit groups that felt threatened by the presence of rival cliques. In this environment, meaningful discussion was nearly impossible. The students couldn't or wouldn't even attempt to understand their peers, let alone people from other major cultures. After several weeks we finally decided to spend a week developing openness and discussion skills in our students. The time was well spent.

Before closing, I would also urge you to incorporate a variety of exciting activities. I mention some of our most successful activities in the article which I gave you earlier. One that I would like to tell you about now is the way in which we handle book reviews. At the beginning of each of our units, we encourage students to present very creative oral reviews of books they read for the unit. Last week we finished our Native American unit. In one well-researched review of Custer Died For Your Sins, the entire class reenacted The Battle of the Little Big Horn. In that reenactment I was given the opportunity to kill Custer. In a review of Chief Red Fox, the reviewer took on the identity of Chief Red Fox. The rest of us were members of the press corps. The only thing that was missing was Ron Nesson.

Thank you.

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School of Education
Brooklyn College
City University of New York
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Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction
126 Langdon Street
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Address: Ralph Sandoval
Phoenix Union High School
Phoenix, Arizona
or
Alleen Nilsen
Department of Education
Arizona State University
Tempe, Arizona 85281

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Address: William Smith
Department of English
Saginaw Valley College
2250 Pierce Road
University Center, Michigan 48710

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Address: Upper Midwest Tri-Racial General Assistance Center
2829 University Avenue S. E.
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